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PROGRAM Crossfire

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SUBJECT Interview with Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan

ANNOUNCER: Crossfire. On the left, Tom Braden. On the right, Robert Novak. In the crossfire, Democratic Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York.

TOM BRADEN: Good evening. Welcome to Crossfire. Our guest tonight makes good copy. He speaks his mind on every subject and his mind is hard to categorize. He could parash (?) a sentence 200 words long. He can also get into the gutter and slug. He's been called everything from conservative to liberal, from turncoat Democrat to whig (sic). He has never been called taciturn. He is Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Bob?

ROBERT NOVAK: Senator Moynihan, the Reverend Benjamin Weir, released by the people who had taken him captive in Lebanon, returned to the United States, to Washington today with the terms of his captors. They say get the government of Kuwait to release 17 Arab terrorists or we start killing American hostages. Reverend Weir thinks we should deal, the Reagan administration says no deal. Who's right?

SEN. PATRICK MOYNIHAN: This is a situation in which you're going to have to support the President. It's about as lonely and hard a decision that a man could be asked to be making in that job. The principle of not negotiating with terrorists is the only thing we can hold on to.

I'd like to find, though, that we out there -- obviously now it's clear that there is a fairly cohesive group that has -- this rather disparate group of Americans, and there were some French -- the French are involved in the -- that it was a terrorist attack on the French and the American embassy in Kuwait that led to the arrest. And by those (unintelligible) in that

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part of the world, a legitimate trial and they are serving legitimate sentences. And I'd like to hear from the Kuwaitis on the subject...

NOVAK: The Kuwaitis...

BRADEN: I'd like to hear from the American intelligence community of which you're a leading critic as well as a partisan in its favor. You're on the committee. Are we doing a good job in...?

SEN. MOYNIHAN: Tom, we have an eight-year limit on the committee. I was vice chairman. My eight years have expired on the end of last year.

BRADEN: All right. Well, let me just say you know a good deal about it.

SEN. MOYNIHAN: (Words unintelligible.)

BRADEN: You know a good deal about it.

Are we doing a good job? Why can't we find those people in Beirut?

SEN. MOYNIHAN: We're doing as good a job as is -- as is doable (sic). The ability to infiltrate organizations of this kind, which can spring up over a cup of coffee in some corner cafe and be operating for a year and a half and then only be nine people, and no one will know them. We shouldn't expect what cannot easily be done.

The French have as much interest in these things as we do, and Beirut was a French mandate. They know that world better than we do. Certainly, we've tried. Certainly, there's a lot of brave men and women out there trying. To ask them to do more is to underestimate the nature of terrorism.

BRADEN: All right. While we are on the subject...

SEN. MOYNIHAN: ...big organization.

BRADEN: While we are on the subject of your experience with intelligence, I think the world knows that you left the committee in a huff for a brief period, after it was discovered that the CIA was mining Nicaraguan harbors. Now, you were an outspoken friend of the Agency at that time, and you got what Barry Goldwater called blanked off. Did you trust William Casey when he comes before the Intelligence Committee?

SEN. MOYNIHAN: Let's be clear about that. What happened, the statute required our committee to be in...

BRADEN: Informed.

SEN. MOYNIHAN: Informed in advance of a significant anticipated activity. It turned out we had not been. Barry Goldwater, as chairman, sent a letter to Mr. Casey saying...

BRADEN: You all read it.

MOYNIHAN: ...he was blanked off. Then he went off to Taiwan. Two days later, Mr. McFarlane, the national security adviser, went up to Annapolis, the Naval Academy, gave a speech and said the committee was fully and timely informed. Whereupon I said if that -- as far as I'm concerned, that's calling Barry Goldwater a liar, and nobody calls Barry Goldwater a liar while I'm around to say otherwise. And I said, take that back or I resign as vice chairman. Three weeks later Mr. Casey came to our committee and apologized.

NOVAK: Well, that's -- that's ancient history, Senator, and -- but the -- but the...

MOYNIHAN: He brought it up.

NOVAK: I know. That's his problem.

But the interesting thing to me is that long after the mining was gone, long after the covert aspects of the operation were no longer there, you were still this year voting against any U.S. aid to the freedom fighters in Nicaragua.

SENATOR MOYNIHAN: I took the bill providing that aid to the floor of the United States Senate three years running, Bob Novak, and said, we find -- our committee finds, and the House agrees -- that the government of El Salvador of not Nicaragua [sic] is in violation of international law intervening into the affairs of El Salvador, violating the charter of the Organization of American States, the Rio Treaty and the U.N. Charter, and in those circumstances we have not just the right but arguably a responsibility to help them resist.

Then, we look up one day and the -- our government is

acting in ways that could be equally described -- mining of harbors. And, at that point, the Congress left.

NOVAK: Yes, but the Congress returned when they saw that the President of Nicaragua was hanging out in the Kremlin, when they say that this was becoming a Soviet satellite, but Pat Moynihan, the great anti-communist, moved against giving aid to the freedom fighters. Why?

SENATOR MOYNIHAN: I didn't call myself a great anti-communist, I'm glad to hear you say. I think that the lesson that the Administration has had to learn is that you don't dissemble with the Congress, that we are there to help them. We have enormously increased the budget of the intelligence communities, not just to the CIA. We have -- we thought we were getting them healthy again, getting their budgets back -- those huge communications budgets, and then this allowance.

It began first in the House, and it carried right over to the Senate.

NOVAK: So, because they dissembled with you, the people of Nicaragua have to suffer. I don't understand that.

SENATOR MOYNIHAN: I don't know about that.

TOM BRADEN: All right, Senator, I want to change the subject a little bit.

Anyone who read your article in the New Yorker a couple of years back on arms control negotiations would consider you something of an authority on that.

Now, the President the other day at his news conference called the Star Wars proposal "off the table," said it wasn't going to negotiate it, and he gave every indication that we intend to go ahead and test.

Now, what does that do, in your view, to negotiations at Geneva? Can the Russians possibly sit down with us when we say in effect that, look, we're going to build a defensive system and we want you at the same time to lower the level of your missiles so it will be easier for us to defend?

SENATOR MOYNIHAN: The President is taking a big gamble and, I think, a necessary one.

BRADEN: A necessary one?

SENATOR MOYNIHAN: A necessary one. He came to office saying he was not going to negotiate another arms control agreement. We simply agreed on how many nuclear warheads each side would have, and that has been the pattern for SALT I. It was the pattern for SALT II. He wants to

see a arms reduction. He was clear on that before he came to Washington. He's been clear ever since.

He took the notion of defense as a way of saying there is not any use in having these offensive weapons, and they won't work anyway, so what do you say we get rid of them on both sides?

It's a bet he's making with the Soviets. The bet is that they will take -- they will believe that we will be able to do this. We're not sure ourselves, but they have a high regard for what we do when we set out to do things. And we'll say, all right, fine. Let's start cutting back, or let's have some limited defenses. Let's stop the escalation.

The danger is two-fold.

One is that the Soviets will say we can't afford to try to emulate the Americans and produce this kind of technology ourselves. This will just double the number of missiles and warheads which we do know how to make, and we'll saturate any system....

BRADEN: Isn't that what they're likely to do?

SENATOR MOYNIHAN: Sure. That's a bet.

The other bet -- and this is the one that worries me more -- President Nixon made this comment in an article in Foreign Affairs, the current one -- for a long time the Soviet watchers have been saying, you know, probably that big build-up of Soviet nuclear weapons in the '60s and '70s, after we said, you know, you can have parity with us, that's fine, we don't mind that -- was not directed towards us. It was directed towards China. And China's the flash point. And China's the thing to worry about.

I've just come back from Peking with a group of Senators who visited China. They think about this all the time, and half of Peking is -- is -- sits on top of these huge underground cities that Mao built in the '60s and early '70s awaiting a Soviet attack.

BRADEN: Yes, but -- but what worries you? You said that something worries you more.

SENATOR MOYNIHAN: What worries me is that the Soviets aren't going to deal with the President on the basis of past initiatives, because their real interest in a growing nuclear armamentarium is China.

NOVAK: Let me -- let me -- let me just move on to the next point.

The chief U.S. negotiator who, by the way, is a Humphrey-Mondale Democrat named Max Kampelman, a friend of yours, I believe.

SENATOR MOYNIHAN: And for a quarter-of-a-century.

NOVAK: I -- he believes -- and I believe he's an intelligent man -- that the strategic defense initiative is indispensable to American security because it can buy us 10, 15 years safety under which perhaps we can negotiate arms control. Do you disagree with that?

SENATOR MOYNIHAN: I don't want to be disagreeing with Ambassador Kampelman. I'm one of the, quote, observers to the negotiations. We were over there in the spring.

The timing of your statement is off, Bob. In 10 or 15 years you might get a defense in place. There's no prospect for anything inside 10 or 15 years, but then what happens if that moment does come to --approaches? That's a pretty dangerous time.

NOVAK: Why -- why do you completely, then, Senator, eliminate even the possibility of the safety by voting against the appropriations for SDI in the Senate?

SENATORY MOYNIHAN: What are you talking about? We have been voting on SDI appropriations for every year I've been in the Senate. They've been in the defense appropriations.

The day before the President announced the arms -- the SDI as an addition to the Pentagon, witnesses before Senator Nunn's committee, Senator Warner's committee, were asked by the, have you got all the money you need for these programs, these experimental programs? "We have all the money we need," they said.

I gave the defense speech at the Democratic Convention in 1980 and said -- we are approaching a wrenching reassessment of deterrence....

BRADEN: I'm sorry, Senator. We've got break into your sentence.

We're talking with Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York, one of the powers of the U.S. Senate, former Ambassador to the United Nations, former Ambassador to India, and former White House aide to Richard Nixon.

We'll be right back, right after this.

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NOVAK: Welcome back to "Crossfire." We're talking with Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Democrat of New York.

Senator Moynihan, it was just nine years ago, a short span of time in the history of man, that William F. Buckley of the National Review, called you "the Man of the Year." A very conservative magazine.

Now, you vote "no" on chemical weapons, "yes" on abortion, "no" on the MX, "no" on school prayer, "no" on strategic defense initiatives, "no" on aid for the Contras. What has happened to you in the nine years since you were the National Review's "Man of the Year?"

SENATOR MOYNIHAN: What's happened to the National Review?

My friend, I have had a consistent voting record with the MX. I was very much in favor of the -- of a new missile. We haven't deployed a new missile since President Kennedy's Administration. When the President Carter came along with the race track scheme, that was a reasonable proposition to get this big, heavy missile out where it couldn't be targeted, but then it turned out it was going to dig up Nevada which brought the President some very good friends, and so he pulled back and put them back in those very silos that we knew we had to get out of and we discovered they were being targeted.

President Carter was about to deploy 200. President Reagan said, well, I can't do that. I'll call for a hundred.

And we went on and said, listen, you cannot put that heavy a missile, that powerful weapon, in a targeted silo or else you go into a launch on warning with a situation -- the Soviets know that you have 10 minutes to decide whether they've launched or not, or vice-versa. You both vote for the Trident Submarine. You vote for the Cruise Missile. You vote for D-5 Missile on the Trident Submarine. You vote for the Stealth Bomber. You vote for defensible....

NOVAK: You voted against the B-1 Bomber, though.

SENATOR MOYNIHAN: But, the Stealth Bomber -- the B-1 was designed 20 years ago.

[Confusion of voices].

BRADEN: Bob? Can I follow up on the same thing that Bob raised?

What we're trying to find out is who you are. You're a Democrat, aren't you?

Did you vote for Walter Mondale?

SENATOR MOYNIHAN: Of course I voted for Walter Mondale.

NOVAK: He helped get him nominated, for goodness sakes.

BRADEN: Your neoconservative partisans were touting you for President just a few years ago.

SENATOR MOYNIHAN: I wasn't. I come from a part of the world --

raised in a part of the world where you're born a Democrat, baptized a democrat.

BRADEN: All right. On that, what do you think is wrong with the Democratic Party? Why is it down? Why does it look hopeless up ahead? What should it do?

SENATOR MOYNIHAN: It doesn't look hopeless up ahead. It's not down. It has two-thirds of the governorships. It has the House. It's just a handful of votes from getting the Senate back. And we have -- I hope we'll have the next President.

BRADEN: You don't think the Party went overboard trying to appeal to special interest groups?

SENATOR MOYNIHAN: Oh, I think we've found ourselves, among working people, described as a special interest group, women described as a special interest group. We've found blacks described as a special interest group. I think they're Americans, and I'm for them.

NOVAK: Senator, let me just try one -- once more on this without getting into the details.

You're a historian, a political analyst, you're a fine writer. I want you to just turn your microscope on yourself. It was not many years ago, although you were not running for president, that there was Jean Kirkpatrick telling me that you were the best man in the country to be president. Just looking at yourself analytically, have you made a little bit of a journey to the left over this last decade?

SENATOR MOYNIHAN: I was more in opposition within my own party, and for a long while I was part of the opposition. I had -- Scoop Jackson was my candidate in '76. I made no bones about that. Then, a totally new party came in, and I'm a Democrat and I'm in the minority in the Senate and out of the White House, and the old proposition -- let the -- the function of the opposition is to oppose. I supported the President in most thing.

But, my job is to make responsible arguments as I see them on behalf of my party....

BRADEN: Do you have any favorite candidate for a Democratic nomination in 1988?

SENATOR MOYNIHAN: No, I'd just like to win the Senate in '86.

NOVAK: But, let me ask you, how do you feel about your party, the party of free trade, the party of farmers, the party that fought the Republican tariffs, deciding that they're going to get a little cheap patriotism in by protectionism by going the protectionist route.

SENATOR MOYNIHAN: I don't know that the word cheap has to be an appropriate word. You can't go across New York State as I just did and not hear trade, trade, trade from all the people you talk to at home and in town meetings. This Administration has turned us into a debtor nation in four years. The President denied it on television.

NOVAK: We were a debtor nation in history.

SENATOR MOYNIHAN: We were up until 1914 when we took money in through investment. We're not borrowing money to pay interest abroad. The President got a little mixed up, you know. It is so.

I have a right to say, listen, the dollar has become so over-valued that you've got to think about the cost of....

NOVAK: The reason I use the word cheap, Senator, was that isn't this -- all this desk bashing and chauvinism and expiation for being on the wrong side of Granada?

SENATOR MOYNIHAN: I'm not desk bashing, and I don't think I was on the wrong side of Granada.

NOVAK: You opposed the Granada operation, didn't you?

BRADEN: Let me....

SENATOR MOYNIHAN: I negotiated the John F. Kennedy long-term cotton textile agreement in 1962.

BRADEN: We've only got a few seconds.

I want to ask you a final question about your experience in the U.N. Do you think that we should try to reduce the number of Russians that we let into this country under diplomatic passports?

SENATOR MOYNIHAN: I think this Administration should let my bill pass the Senate -- in Congress. It passed the Senate. It tells the Soviet Union to stop intercepting the telephone calls of United States citizens in this city and in New York City, my state, where they have a 22-story communications tower in Riverdale. We know they're doing it. The FBI says they're doing it.

BRADEN: All right. Would cut their number?

SENATOR MOYNIHAN: I would have the President throw those people out of this country, and the Administration won't do it.

BRADEN: That's it.

Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

SENATOR MOYNIHAN: Bob Novak and I agree.

BRADEN: Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan has the last word. We want to thank him for being our guest on "Crossfire" tonight. Bob Novak and I'll be back for just a minute.

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BRADEN: Moynihan's a Democrat, Bob, but he's an individualist. Do you think he'll ever run for President?

NOVAK: No, but I think -- I wish you could have seen the look on your face, Tom, when he said that the President's position on strategic defense initiative might not be all bad.

Think about it.

BRADEN: Oh, he thought it was pretty bad.

From the left, I'm Tom Braden. Goodnight for "Crossfire."

NOVAK: On the right, I'm Robert Novak. Join us again next time for another edition of "Crossfire."